



CDC ASSESSMENT INITIATIVE

WHAT IS THE PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE?

The 2002 Institute of Medicine Report “The Future of the Public’s Health in the 21st Century” identified a need for greater assessment capacity at the federal, state, and local levels. Assessment is defined as the regular, systematic collection, assembly, analysis, and dissemination of information on the health of a community. Such information is critical in determining community health problems, trends in the occurrence of these problems, and reasons for their occurrence. This information is also used to establish priorities and drive public health policy development and decision making.

WHAT HAS CDC ACCOMPLISHED?

In 1992, CDC began funding states to develop new systems and methods to improve how data are used in the public health policy- and decision-making process. Since that time, CDC has entered into cooperative agreements with 15 states (FL, IA, ME, MA, MN, MO, NM, NY, NC, OH, OR, RI, TX, UT, and WA) to

- Improve community access to health data and information.
- Develop epidemiologic skills in the public health workforce to support accurate interpretation and understanding of data.
- Design systematic approaches to developing and evaluating community health assessments at the local level.
- Form partnerships with managed care organizations and Medicaid agencies to link disparate data sets, thus increasing their utility.

In 2003, in coordination with state partners, CDC sponsored the Fourth Assessment Initiative Conference, drawing on expertise from state and local health departments, federal agencies, universities, and public health organizations nationwide to share information on promising practices to improve assessment capability.

Example of Program in Action

Through the Assessment Initiative, the New York State Department of Health developed an evaluation tool to rate the overall completeness and usability of community health assessments (CHAs) completed by local health departments (LHDs). The results of this evaluation were shared with the staffs of 125 LHDs in four facilitated feedback sessions to compare state and local perspectives on characteristics of an effective CHA. Other goals included strengthening the statewide guidance and format for completing a CHA; identifying public health workforce training needs; and providing a baseline against which future CHA quality evaluations can be compared. One outcome of this process was the development of an electronic CHA Clearinghouse designed to share examples of promising practices employed by LHDs, CHA data sources/tools, and links to evidence-based community health practices. The clearinghouse is available as a resource to all public health agencies at www.health.state.ny.us/nysdoh/chac/index.htm.

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

In the future, CDC’s Assessment Initiative will focus on

- Producing widely applicable knowledge on effective assessment methods and practices that can be shared amongst all states.
- Supporting the evaluation and sustainability of innovative systems and methodologies to enhance assessment capacity.

For additional information on this or other CDC programs, visit www.cdc.gov/program

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